

# Senior Seminar: Identity Politics & Polarization

Western Washington University, Fall 2021

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**Professor:** Dr. Catherine Wineinger  
**Course Number:** PLSC 431 (5 credits)  
**Class Time:** M/W/F 1:00 p.m.-2:20 p.m.  
**Room:** AH 414

**Office Location:** Arntzen Hall 416  
**Office Hours:** M/W/F 11:30am-12:30pm or by appt.  
**Email:** cathy.wineinger@wwu.edu  
**Department Phone:** (360) 650-3469

## Course Description

This seminar explores polarization in American politics through the lens of identity. How do our social identities – our gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, etc. – shape our politics? To what extent is party affiliation an aspect of our identity, and how has this changed over time? What is the relationship between party politics, ideology, and social identity? We will engage with recent political science research to delve deeper into the concept of “identity” and analyze the nature, causes, and consequences of polarization at both the mass and elite levels in American politics.

## Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand and engage with scholarly debates on the concept of “identity politics”
- Evaluate the causes and consequences of polarization in American politics
- Analyze the relationship between social identity and political polarization in the U.S.
- See improvement in their writing skills

## Departmental Learning Outcomes

- Possess substantive knowledge in their area of concentration (1)
- Exhibit analytical skills in interpreting data (2)
- Demonstrate writing competence (3)
- Engage in independent research (4)
- Demonstrate critical, independent thinking about politics and public life (5)
- Understand and evaluate assumptions, values, and beliefs in context of diverse local, national and global communities (7)
- Convey substantive knowledge using reading and written and oral communication (8)

## Required Readings

All required and recommended readings/assignments – including articles, book chapters, podcasts, etc. – will be posted on Canvas within the corresponding module/week. Assignments should be submitted on Canvas.

## A Typical Week

**Mondays:** Discussion & Lecture

**Wednesdays:** Discussion & Lecture

**Fridays:** Writing Workshop (**please bring a laptop or tablet to class**)

*\*If you do not have a laptop, Western has them available for you to check out for the quarter.*

*For details, please visit: <https://atus.wwu.edu/kb/check-out-laptop>*

## Class Conduct and Expectations

The content of this class is certainly important to understand, but keep in mind that the two *main* goals of this senior seminar are to 1) practice critically engaging with political science research and 2) improve your writing and research skills.

With these goals in mind, **Mondays and Wednesdays** will be focused on class discussions (I'll lecture a bit to cover some big points, but most of class time will be led by you!). In order to create an environment that encourages meaningful participation, it's important that we all treat each other with respect and abide by our *community guidelines*, which we will create collectively on the first day of class.

**Fridays** will be completely dedicated to writing, so please bring a laptop or tablet! I will introduce a writing concept or skill, and you will have the opportunity to work on that skill during class. The goal is to help you build toward writing your final literature review.

### Earning Your Grade

Discussion Facilitator.....	10%
Meaningful Participation.....	15%
Short Essay.....	15%
Peer Review.....	10%
Literature Review*.....	50%

\*You must submit **all** of the following assignments to receive a passing grade on the literature review:

- Topic Proposal
- Annotated Bibliography
- First Draft
- Final Draft

### Scale

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
<60	F

### Pass/No Pass Grades

Students opting for EP/NP grading in Winter Quarter 2020 will receive an EP for grades of D+ and above. A grade of D or D- will be recorded as a NP, which will not earn credits or be reflected in the GPA. A grade of F will be recorded as NP on the transcript, will not receive degree credit, and will not be reflected in the GPA.

*Extra credit:* You may earn **up to 2% extra credit** on your final grade if you attend a political event on campus or in the community and write a 1-2 page reflection about how the event is related to this class **Each reflection is worth 1% extra credit.**

### Important Dates:

F, Sept. 24 – Due: Survey & Facilitator Sign-up  
F, Oct. 8 – Due: Short Essay  
F, Oct. 15 – Due: Topic Proposal  
F, Oct. 29 – Due: Annotated Bibliography

F, Nov. 5 – Due: First Draft  
F, Nov. 12 – Due: Peer Review  
**W/F, Nov. 24-26 – NO CLASS**  
F, Dec. 3 – Due: Final Draft

### WWU Policies and Student Resources

Please visit [syllabi.wvu.edu](http://syllabi.wvu.edu) for a list of university policies and resources, including: plagiarism and academic integrity policies, disability resources, religious accommodation policies, etc.

### Attendance/Absences

A reminder: participation is 15% of your grade and you will be quizzed on lectures, so it is worthwhile for you to come to class each day! One or two absences will not affect your grade, and you do not need to contact me if you're going to miss class (unless you have an extended [leave of absence](#)). If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.

### Extensions and Late Work

I expect you to turn in your assignments on time, but I understand that sometimes life gets in the way. If you need an extension on an assignment, please email me **before** the assignment is due. There are **no extensions on presentations, and I will not accept work after the last day of class.** *Note: I cannot guarantee you feedback on late work (that also means you may not have an opportunity to revise the assignment).*

### Office Hours/Contact Information

Office hours are for **you!** I want you to succeed (both in and beyond this class). If you have questions, would like to further discuss readings/assignments, or just want to talk about politics, career goals, etc., please feel free to stop by.

- **When:** M/W/F 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
- **Where:** 1) In-person meetings: Arntzen Hall 416  
2) Zoom meetings: Click the “Virtual Office Hours” link located at the top of the Modules page on Canvas

**If you cannot meet during these hours, please email me at [cathy.wineinger@wwu.edu](mailto:cathy.wineinger@wwu.edu) to schedule an appointment.** I only read and reply to emails during regular business hours. Give me one full business day to respond to your email, but don't be afraid to follow up after that!

### A Note on Self-Care

Nothing is more important than taking good care of yourself! I expect you to give your best effort in class, but I will also work to be flexible and accommodating (and I hope you will be patient with me as well!). **Your physical and mental health is always a priority.** Please stay in communication with me so that we can work together to find solutions to any issues that may arise this quarter.

## Senior Seminar (Identity Politics & Polarization): Fall 2021 Course Agenda

Below is the tentative schedule for this quarter. Please note that this course agenda is subject to change. If a change is made, I will send you an email and update the syllabus on Canvas.

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### WEEK 1 – Introduction

#### W/ September 22 – Introduction and Class Overview

- Review Syllabus & Class Assignments

#### F/ September 24 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities*

**\*\*DUE by 11:59pm: 1) Complete Survey 2) Sign up to be a Discussion Facilitator**

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### WEEK 2 – What is “Identity Politics”?

#### M/ September 27 – Identity and Social Movement Politics

- Bernstein, Mary. 2005. "Identity Politics." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 31:47-74.
- *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. 1977. Combahee River Collective.

#### W/ September 29 – Identity and Electoral Politics

- Walters, Suzanna Danuta. 2018. “In Defense of Identity Politics.” *Signs*. 43(2): 473-488.
- Smith, Barbara. Feb. 10, 2020. “I coined the term ‘identity politics.’ I’m endorsing Bernie Sanders.” *The Guardian*.
- **Podcast (optional):** “[Visibility is on the Ballot](#).” Oct. 26, 2020. *Brown Girls Guide to Politics*.

#### F/ October 1 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities*

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### WEEK 3 – Identity and Party Politics

#### M/ October 4 – Which Identities Influence Political Behavior?

- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. “Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective.” *American Political Science Review*. 106 (3): 517-532.
- Hong, Jane. 2021. “What the election of Asian American GOP women means for the party.” *Made by History, The Washington Post*. March 8..

#### W/ October 6 – Social Group and Party Identification

- Ahler, Douglas J. 2018. “The Group Theory of Parties: Identity Politics, Party Stereotypes, and Polarization in the 21st Century.” *The Forum*. 16(1): 3–22.
- Bacon, Perry, Jr. Sept. 11, 2018. “Americans Are Shifting The Rest of Their Identity to Match Their Politics.” *FiveThirtyEight*.

#### F/ October 8 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities*

**\*\*DUE by 11:59pm: Short Essay**

## Week 4 – Identity, Polarization, and American Democracy

### M/ October 11 – What is “Polarization”?

- McCarty, Nolan. 2019. *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch. 2: “What is Polarization?”
- Mettler, Suzanne and Robert C. Lieberman. Nov. 17, 2020. “Four deadly threats to American democracy are raging all at once.” *LA Times*.

### W/ October 13 – Threatening or Strengthening Democracy?

- Stacey Y. Abrams; John Sides; Michael Tesler; Lynn Vavreck; Jennifer A. Richeson; Francis Fukuyama. March-April 2019. “E Pluribus Unum: The Fight over Identity Politics.” *Foreign Affairs* 98(2): 160-170.
- **Podcast (optional):** “[Francis Fukuyama’s case against identity politics.](#)” 2019. *The Ezra Klein Show*.

### F/ October 15 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities*

**\*\*NOTE: NO office hours today! Please email me if you’d like to schedule an appointment.**

**\*\*DUE by 11:59pm: Topic Proposal**

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## WEEK 5 – Who’s Polarized?

### M/ October 18 – Elite Polarization

- Russell, Annelise. 2018. “U.S. Senators on Twitter: Asymmetric Party Rhetoric in 140 Characters.” *American Politics Research*. 46(4): 695-723.
- Swers, Michele. Jan. 13, 2014. “Electing more women to Congress isn’t a solution for polarization.” The Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*.

### W/ October 20 – Mass Polarization

- Mason, Lilliana and Julie Wronski. 2018. “One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship.” *Advances in Political Psychology*. 39(1): 257-277.
- Abramowitz, Alan I. Jan 20, 2014. “How race and religion have polarized American voters.” The Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*.
- **Podcast (optional):** “[The age of ‘mega-identity’ politics.](#)” *The Ezra Klein Show*.

### F/ October 22 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities*
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## WEEK 6 – Why Are We Polarized?

### M/ October 25 – Political Realignment

- Schickler, Eric. 2013. “New Deal Liberalism and Racial Liberalism in the Mass Public, 1937-1968.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 11(1): 75-98.
- Maxwell, Angie. Jul. 26, 2019. “What we get wrong about the Southern Strategy.” Made by History, *The Washington Post*.

## W/ October 27 – Structural, Psychological, and Cultural Explanations

- Hinchliffe, Kelsey L. and Frances Lee. 2016. “Party Competition and Conflict in State Legislatures.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*. 16(2): 172-197.
- Alwin, Duane F. and Paula A. Tufiş. Apr. 4, 2016. “How the culture wars are driving political polarization.” *LSE United States Politics & Policy Blog*.

## F/ October 29 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities*  
\*\*DUE by 11:59pm: Annotated Bibliography
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## WEEK 7 – Identity, Polarization, and the Media

### M/ November 1 – The Media and Public Opinion

- Lajevardi, Nazita. 2020. *Outsiders at Home: The Politics of American Islamophobia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 6: “Improving Mass Attitudes: The Media’s Role in Shaping Group Attitudes and Policy Preferences.”
- Levendusky, Matt. Feb. 3, 2014. “Are Fox and MSNBC polarizing America?” The Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*.
- **Podcast (optional):** [Interview with Nazita Lajevardi](#). *New Books in Political Science*.

### W/ November 3 – Social Media & Anti-Establishment Politics

- Uscinski, Joseph E., Adam M. Enders, Michelle I. Seelig, Casey A. Klofstad, John R. Funchion, Caleb Everett, Stefan Wuchty, Kamal Premaratne, and Manohar N. Murthi. 2021. “American Politics in Two Dimensions: Partisan and Ideological Identities vs. Anti-Establishment Orientations.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 1-19.
- Kelly, Annie. Sept. 10, 2020. “Mothers for QAnon.” *The New York Times*.

## F/ November 5 – Workshop

- *In-Class Activities*  
\*\*DUE by 11:59pm: First Draft
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## WEEK 8 – Consequences of Polarization

### M/ November 8 – Elite-Level Consequences

- Thomsen, Danielle. 2015. “Why So Few (Republican) Women? Explaining the Partisan Imbalance of Women in the U.S. Congress.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 30(2):295-323.
- Binder, Sarah. Nov. 7, 2018. “Here are 4 things to expect from a new, Trumpier, more polarized Congress.” The Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*.

### W/ November 10 – Mass-Level Consequences

- Jardina, Ashley. 2020. “In-Group Love and Out-Group Hate: White Racial Attitudes in Contemporary U.S. Elections.” *Political Behavior*.
- Kalmoe, Nathan P. and Lilliana Mason. May 7, 2020. “Most Americans Reject Partisan Violence, But There Is Still Cause for Concern.” *Democracy Fund Voter Study Group*.

**F/ November 12 – Workshop**

- *In-Class Activities*

**\*\*DUE by 11:59pm: Peer Review**

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**WEEK 9 – What Do We Do Now?**

**M/ November 15 – Building Coalitions**

- Tormos, F. 2017. “Intersectional solidarity.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. 5(4): 707-720.
- Shapiro, Robert Y. Jan. 20, 2014. “Can Young Voters Break the Cycle of Polarization?” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*.

**W/ November 17 – New Strategies**

- Klein, Ezra. 2020. *Why We’re Polarized*. New York, NY: Avid Reader Press. Ch. 10: “Managing Polarization – and Ourselves.”
- Podcast (required): “[What Democrats Got Wrong About Hispanic Voters](#).” *The Ezra Klein Show*.

**F/ November 19 – Workshop**

- *In-Class Activities*
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**WEEK 10 – Class Wrap-Up**

**M/ November 22 – Final Discussion**

- No required readings; come prepared to discuss what you’ve learned this quarter

**W/ November 24 – NO CLASS – ENJOY YOUR FALL BREAK**

**F/ November 26 – NO CLASS – ENJOY YOUR FALL BREAK**

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**WEEK 11 – Office Hours & Writing Week**

**M/ November 29 – Extended Office Hours**

**W/ December 1 – Extended Office Hours**

**F/ December 3 – Extended Office Hours**

**\*\*DUE by 11:59pm: Final Draft**

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**FINALS WEEK (Dec. 6-10) – NO FINAL EXAM**

Have a great winter break 😊